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Official Records

112th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 26 July 2011, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 27 (*continued*)

High-level Meeting on Youth

Social development

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Draft resolution (A/65/L.87)

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, who will make a statement along with a youth delegate.

Ms. Fries-Gaier (Germany): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany. Germany aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Ms. Fritze (Germany): Let me first take this opportunity to express our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Norway.

I will present two crucial points proclaimed by the youth living in Germany — first, full and effective youth participation, and secondly, the issue of migration and youth on the international agenda.

Over the past months, my colleague and I have travelled thousands of kilometres around our country to meet young people of various backgrounds. Many productive dialogues and discussions were held, enabling us to collect their visions, thoughts and beliefs.

Although dialogue is one of the topics of the International Year of Youth, we regret that the framework of the Year was not used to its fullest potential with regard to its long-term impact. This High-level Meeting is yet another meeting just about youth issues. However, the question remains: were young people really involved in the negotiations?

When focusing on the best interests of youth, as mentioned in the outcome document (resolution 65/312), politicians must involve young people as equal partners and key stakeholders at all levels. Therefore, youth participation means going beyond dialogue. It is the involvement of youth in the entire decision-making process, beginning with the definition of the relevant issues and ending with the implementation and evaluation of policies.

As a suitable instrument, I want to mention the productive process of what is called structured dialogue. This initiative was launched within the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field. Clear indicators help young people to make sure that the agreements between them and policymakers are followed up and monitored afterwards. However, measurable indicators are still missing in the World Programme of Action for Youth and should therefore be integrated.

One could also say that democracy is learning by doing. For example, participation starts in schools by nominating class representatives and in youth-led

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organizations by being in charge. Germany supports such initiatives by fostering sustainable initiatives for local, regional and national youth councils. Also, programmes for youth delegate at the United Nations are an efficient way to involve young people, and I urge all States to integrate those programmes.

Young people have the shared common potential, creativity and power to contribute to their societies. The biggest resource we have in this world is the developing skills of youth. Nevertheless, for some young people migration is a result of desperation, as seen in Eastern Africa. For that reason, I urge all Member States to integrate the issue of youth and migration into the United Nations agenda. Giving young people the opportunity to take over responsibilities, empowering them and letting them participate is not just an investment, it is a value in itself.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden, who will make a statement along with a youth representative.

Ms. Burgstaller (Sweden): Sweden welcomes the opportunity this High-level Meeting affords us to highlight the importance of investing in and empowering young women and men.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union.

I will share the floor with the Swedish youth representative, Malin Johansson, who was appointed by the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations. She will make a statement in her personal capacity.

At the outset, I would like to join others in expressing our deepest sympathy to our neighbours in Norway after the horrendous events last Friday. Our thoughts are with them. Those acts of terror aimed at the Government and at young, engaged people were a direct attack on an open and democratic society. This is unacceptable, and we will stand in solidarity with our Norwegian friends to protect the values we so firmly believe in.

Young women and men, with their knowledge, experiences and engagement, can contribute immensely to peaceful and sustainable development. But not all young people have the same possibilities. Therefore, we need to strengthen our resolve to ensure full respect for the universal and inalienable rights of all young women and men, in all countries, to participation, to education, to decent work and to health.

I believe that this High-level Meeting has already shown that we are all prepared to work together with and for young people. Let us do that in a culture of dialogue and mutual understanding, and with the World Programme of Action for Youth as our point of departure.

Ms. Johansson (Sweden): My name is Malin Johansson. I have been elected as a youth representative by the National Council of Swedish Youth Organizations.

I too want to express my deepest condolences and sympathy to our neighbours in Norway. My thoughts are with all the young people who were at Utøya and all the families and friends who lost a loved one.

Dialogue and mutual understanding must defeat ignorance and brutality. It feels more important than ever in a time like this. As a young person I very much welcome the theme of this High-level Meeting. Dialogue and mutual understanding are always key factors in moving forward.

At the same time, just talking is not enough. We need concrete action in order for progress to be made. Now it is up to the Members, the decision-makers, to prove that this is not just talk from their side and that they do intend to take concrete action. That means, among other things, implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth, adopted by the General Assembly.

There has been some discussion about the Programme of Action in the negotiations on the outcome document of this Meeting. We firmly believe that the Programme is a very good basis to work from. Any future revision of the Programme must be preceded by a thorough evaluation of the Programme, in-depth dialogue with youth and youth organizations and sufficient time for discussions in and between Member States. However, until then, the implementation of the Programme must remain a priority for all Member States, as must the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

As previously mentioned, human rights are universal and apply to everyone, anywhere, at all times and without exceptions. Human rights must serve as a basis when developing youth policies.

A fundamental right is participation, which is something that is very close to my heart, as a young person with a disability. Many young people today, with or without disabilities, consistently face marginalization and exclusion. Everyone, regardless of disability, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex, gender identification or gender expression should have the same rights and the same opportunities to participate on equal terms. What is more, the participation of young people has to be real and not just symbolic.

Youth participation needs to permeate all levels of politics. Youth perspectives can be expressed only by young people themselves, and that is why youth-led organizations are essential in achieving youth participation. Youth-led organizations must therefore be strengthened and encouraged.

It is central that the work for young people's participation, influence and power does not stop at national borders. Young people, through youth organizations, must participate in, influence and hold power in international arenas as well.

That is why I regret that there are so few young people represented here today, especially since this is a conference on youth. We have the right to contribute with our full potential, creativity and strength here and now. Young people are no more the future than middle-aged people are the past.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Daniel Supplice, special representative of the President of Haiti.

Mr. Supplice (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour to take the floor in my capacity as Special Adviser to the new President-elect of the Republic of Haiti, His Excellency Mr. Michel Joseph Martelly, and on behalf of all the people of Haiti.

The convening of this High-level Meeting illustrates the constructive desire of Member States to commit to creating a more secure and stable environment for the harmonious development of youth around the globe, who seek peace, security, health and knowledge. In this respect, Haiti can but welcome such an initiative and congratulate the co-chairs and facilitators of the outcome document, who have provided young people with a valuable tool, the use of which can only be worthwhile.

The Haitian delegation endorses the statement to be made by the representative of Argentina, as Chair of the Group of 77 and China, and that made by the representative of Suriname on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)(see A/65/PV.111).

In launching the national education fund on 26 May 2011, the President of the Republic declared he had good news for the children of Haiti, with the launching of a cross-sectoral consortium to finance their education. This declaration confirmed one of the pillars of state action, that is, providing free primary education for those who have never had the opportunity to go to school because they lacked the means to do so.

In a country where more than half of the population is under age 21, education is one of the sectors able to guarantee a better future for young people, and the Government of 14 May has understood this. That is why the Government is coordinating the activities of national and international stakeholders in order to develop a legal and institutional framework that will guarantee the socio-economic integration of young people in order to keep them away from the temptations of drugs, organized crime and prostitution. Creating conditions conducive to hope and opportunity is essential.

The Haitian delegation, which I have the honour of leading, believes that international cooperation is essential in order to eliminate the exploitation and use of child labour, which contravenes all moral and ethical standards. Haiti urges Member States to scale up efforts not only in drawing up legal texts, but also — and above all — in ensuring their implementation.

The delegation of the Republic of Haiti realizes that young people around the world are a crucial human resource for sustainable development, social progress and technological innovation. Therefore, their contribution to local, national and regional development should be welcomed and appreciated. The Haitian delegation believes that the spirit of rebuilding a durable social environment of protection and of developing young people should continue to inspire the action of all States in order to guarantee better survival, development and effective protection.

I would like to conclude by pausing to commemorate the memory of the victims of the despicable attack of Friday, 22 July 2011 in central

Oslo and the killings that followed on the island of Utøya, which led to so much pain and suffering for the bereaved families.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yaba Pedro Alberto, Deputy Minister of Youth of Angola.

Mr. Alberto (Angola) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, the Government of Angola would like to convey to the people of Norway our most deeply felt condolences for the recent loss of lives in that country.

The issues under discussion at this meeting illustrate the international community's concern with the problems youth face and which require the special attention of the Member States to ensure the sustainable well-being of young people.

Like the rest of the African continent, Angola has a population of mostly young people. In our case, more than 40 per cent of the population is under 30 years of age.

Regarding youth, in 2005 the Government adopted an Executive Youth Support Plan, which aims to solve the most essential social aspirations of youth in terms of housing, technical and vocational training, employment, social and subsidized credit and the promotion of young entrepreneurs, inter alia. After evaluating the results of the first five years of implementation of this Plan, a proposal for a state policy for youth was drafted.

In analysing the declaration that is the subject of this meeting, we believe that matters related to youth should be included in the United Nations position, especially in the following areas. A specialized United Nations agency should to address youth-related issues should be created, as should a United Nations juvenile court to coordinate youth-related issues in the General Assembly. The professionalization of working with youth should be encouraged. The World Programme of Action for Youth should be reviewed and adjusted, especially the mechanisms for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. United Nations cooperation with the appropriate national, subregional and continental pro-youth structures should be strengthened. Lastly, we should establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the declaration adopted at this meeting (resolution 65/312).

On behalf of the Angolan delegation and youth, we welcome the opportunity to participate in this forum of dialogue on and between youth, and we believe that with everyone's efforts, we can achieve the goals we have set.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sorin Moldovan, Under-Secretary of State and Vice-President of the National Authority for Sport and Youth of Romania.

Mr. Moldovan (Romania): Allow me to express, on behalf of the Romanian people, our deepest condolences to the bereaved people of Norway for the tragic events of Friday 22 July, which claimed the lives of so many innocents. Since the main victims of this despicable act of hatred were youth and perhaps the future leaders of a nation, the tragedy brings to this meeting an added sense of urgency.

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to be present here at the United Nations, in this very special period marked by the International Year of Youth under the theme of "Dialogue and mutual understanding", while at the same time we are celebrating 25 years since the first International Year of Youth, in 1985, under the theme "Participation, Development, Peace".

We all now have the opportunity to be here together, as representatives from different continents and cultures, and we must recognize that this meeting should represent a turning point for consolidating a common perspective on how to address the challenges faced by youth in the globalized world of today.

The World Programme of Action for Youth, as amended in 2007, is described as a global blueprint for youth policies and programmes. It identifies 15 priority areas that require continuous and important efforts. The world in which we live today needs these efforts. The complicated mix consisting of the global financial crisis, uncertainty and emerging conflicts affects our own way of living. We need to face reality and recognize the fact that young people are particularly vulnerable in these times of crisis.

I am here today both as a representative of Romanian youth and as a token of my country's commitment in promoting youth at top decision-making levels in the Government in matters concerning youth. From this position I am and will be a steadfast supporter of the idea of taking action and offering

opportunities for youth — because today's youth are the main resources of tomorrow.

We live in a quickly growing global society in which the links between nations are growing ever stronger and more complex, and I strongly believe that this presents the youth of today not with an extra challenge but with a unique opportunity. Mobility has allowed young people to develop a better sense of understanding towards other cultures and societies, breeding tolerance and balance. From this point of view, I think we have reason to be optimistic, since more and more young people from challenged areas of the world now benefit from the fruits of globalization.

Global society and its inherent mobility offer young individuals the possibility for better training in various fields, making a considerable contribution to their overall capacity to adapt to the increasingly complex requirements of today's dynamic global labour market. On the other hand, we should not be discouraged in supporting the costs of facilitating, introducing and promoting youth access to information and communication technologies, which are crucial elements that cannot be denied in our increasingly interdependent global society.

Youth organizations around the world represent an asset, and we, the Member States, need to continuously support the non-governmental sector as a key factor in the efficient promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms and tolerance. The key for a sound democratic life is dialogue. Therefore we need to support cooperation with civil society and identify the best channels to address the needs of young people, especially those who are the most disadvantaged.

Member States also need to focus on developing coherent national youth policies that take into account the current state of the globalization process and its impact on young people from different regions of the world.

There is a crucial responsibility that lies on the shoulders of United Nations entities, national youth bodies and Governments, and that is to develop or improve existing programmes and increase financial support for achieving national and regional goals.

As a brief example of my country's most recent concrete action in delivering on its commitments regarding youth, I will refer only to the legislative initiative passed this year aimed specifically at encouraging and facilitating the establishment of small and medium-sized companies by young people. Through this measure, the Government seeks to engage even more youth in the private sector, especially during these difficult economic times, when all of society must take an active part in a robust and sustainable economic recovery.

In addition, I would like to point out that in Romania, the United Nations youth delegate programme is being coordinated by a specialized body, the National Authority for Sport and Youth. We undertook this responsibility bearing in mind that young people must have the opportunity to have insight into the manner in which global high-level decisions are taken. Therefore we encourage other Member States to support this programme as a fundamental tool for youth participation in democratic life.

The adoption of the declaration of the High-level Meeting on Youth of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, on the theme "Dialogue and Mutual Understanding" (resolution 65/312), represents a success that allows us to hope that tomorrow will be a better day for the youth we represent.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mitali Protais, Minister for Youth, Sports and Culture of Rwanda, who will also speak on behalf of the African States.

Mr. Protais (Rwanda): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and on behalf of the African Group and the Conference of Ministers in charge of youth affairs in the African Union, allow me to express my sincere condolences to the people of Norway upon the tragedy that befell their nation, which resulted in the loss of many lives.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group, which also aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Dialogue and mutual agreement have always been the basis for the maintenance of good relations between individuals and different societies from the oldest times. Nowadays, with all of the communications and technology facilities that have evolved over these last decades, long-distance dialogue among young people has increased greatly, thus making the world smaller while widening the opportunities that it offers. However, not all the young

people of the world profit from that dialogue because of the many challenges related to the development of their respective countries, including a great part of the African continent.

Driven by the will to analyse the question of how to integrate young people in the development of their countries, and with the contribution provided by their flourishing in their communities, the heads of African States have, during their Assembly, taken decisions aiming at providing information and communication technologies to their people, including youth, which will allow them to reinforce dialogue and communication and share their experience with other young people worldwide.

These decisions concern, inter alia, the strengthening of national programmes and regional cooperation for development, the interconnection of infrastructure through broadband, the deployment of regional Internet exchange points, and the improvement of the connectivity of the rural sector based on the principles of the neutrality of technology, non-discrimination and open access in support of PIDA and through the use of synergies with the transport and the energy sectors.

The African heads of State also decided to develop programmes and actions for the acquisition of basic competences in communication and information technologies and for reinforcing capacities, in particular for the national and regional standardization bodies.

Other efforts are also being made at the level of the African continent, such as those on universal access to education, the empowerment of girls and young women, the sensitization of young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS and drugs, and the demobilization and socio-economic rehabilitation of young people who participated directly in armed conflict.

However, a major challenge confronting young people in the world and in particular on the African continent is to become established. Those who are likely to find work come up against under-employment and the indecent conditions of such work. It enormously affects their health and their output. Therefore we recommend that a global strategy on the employment of young people be analysed in order to see how to join our efforts to maximize the ways to offer employment and decent work conditions to them.

These efforts should not be limited to the national or regional levels. If the issue of taking up the challenges that all young people face is dealt with at the global level, the combined efforts of the nations will make it possible to eliminate a good number of them. That will contribute in various ways to the achievement of certain objectives of the Charter of the United Nations, such as peacekeeping, and of the Millennium Development Goals, which are also included in the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The world has always changed, and changes have always been brought about by the new generation. Accordingly, organizations of young people should be created to channel their ideals and aspirations in order to give them the possibility of exchange with their elders, thus contributing to the socio-economic and cultural development of their countries.

Eager to reinforce such dialogue, African heads of State met under the theme "Accelerate youth empowerment for sustainable development" and decided on the need for a coordinating or lead United Nations agency to facilitate youth matters and dedicated to youth development programmes within the United Nations, and to coordinate and raise funds for youth development initiatives within Member States. In Africa, we feel that youth development and empowerment will not be fully realized if youth representation in all organs and bodies remains a challenge.

Once young people, in all their diversity, fully take part in decision-making through the appropriate channels, they will contribute to peacekeeping in their respective countries and the world and will open the door to continuity, without clashes in its respective communities.

It is important that the decisions that we make today be put into action and be evaluated in the future, because they are important, and they blow a wind of hope for innumerable young people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. María Rubiales de Chamorro, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we wish to express our condolences to and solidarity with the people and Government of Norway, who have been victims of a

criminal attack that has been vehemently condemned by our people and Government.

Nicaragua has a population of almost 6 million inhabitants. Of them, 70 per cent are 29 years old or less. That is a great development opportunity in the coming years, as we invest in capacity-building and economic development, starting with education, training or accumulation of work and business experience and on the basis of the life cycle and personal careers of the workforce.

It is worth underscoring that most jobs — 58 per cent — are done by individuals less than 30 years old. With the triumph of the people's Sandanista revolution in 1979, the participation of young people in the revolutionary fight and victory and in the literacy campaign that reduced illiteracy from 60 per cent to 12.5 per cent was stressed.

Since 2007 — the date of the second phase of our revolution — the people of Nicaragua have been ensuring their revolutionary present and future, since they have integrated young people into social programmes that the Government develops for the well-being of the people. Thus our Government plan for the period 2012-2016 gives priority to social and economic polices that ensure job creation and quality work, in particular for young people. Young people have been empowering, training and educating themselves in order to take the forefront that belongs to them in countless activities developed either by them or for them. They are no longer mere spectators, but have become actors.

Nicaragua's young people have assumed their commitment to society as youth building the present and future. They participate decisively in each and every one of the major programmes promoted by our Government. Those programmes include the construction of houses, rural and urban schools and sports facilities, health and literacy days, natural disaster brigades, reforestation, the promotion of a cultural identity, the protection of our Mother Earth and support for natural resource conservation. In short, our young people are at the forefront of that great scheme and extensive plan to restore the rights of the Nicaraguan people, youth and family.

In Nicaragua, we are experiencing a youth revolution. Today, young people are the standard-bearers. They lead social programmes, supporting the country's poorest people. They see our homeland as Mother Earth, liberty and revolution. Nicaragua believes that each year is the year of youth. This year, we have celebrated it, and will continue to do so with further work for and greater commitment to the revolution and people of Nicaragua.

We still have challenges and obstacles to be addressed as a priority. We must continue to improve the quality of employment and work and generate more and better jobs for young people, focusing on women. We must continue to promote and defend compliance with young people's human rights, helping to create possibilities and conditions that facilitate including the youth as complete social actors, with full enjoyment of their rights.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mrs. Nicole Ameline, National Assembly Deputy and member of the Foreign Affairs Commission of France.

Mrs. Ameline (France) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of France, I would first like to join all speakers who have conveyed their condolences to Norway following the tragedy that struck that country.

I would like to thank the United Nations for having organized this High-level Meeting on Youth, who are too often forgotten and who must be returned to the centre of the social, economic and political dialogue.

France associates itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, and would like to add some observations in its national capacity.

France has always considered young people the cornerstone of development. We recall in particular the 2005 France-Africa summit, with the stirring title "African youth — its vitality, its creativity and its aspirations". On that occasion, for the first time, young people from five regions of Africa were able to express their aspirations and expectations.

We are convinced that the future of young people requires first and foremost quality education for all. In France, the budget of the Ministry of National Education represents the largest part of the State budget, 21 per cent in 2010. Our country is one of the leading international donors of education development assistance, with a total amount of official assistance of approximately €1.5 billion in 2009. Along with supporting basic education in developing countries, France also provides aid for higher education. This

year France hosted 278,000 foreign students in its universities, who represent about 12 per cent of that entire student population.

However, education, as a fundamental pillar of society's economic and social development, must be directly linked to the needs of the professional world. For that reason France is working to create training and employment opportunities. Here I would like to give two examples, namely, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, which are described in the text of my statement.

In conclusion, I call the Assembly's attention to the situation of young girls, a topic that is especially dear to me, as I hold the position of Vice-President of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Today at least 600 million young girls throughout the world live in extremely vulnerable situations. They encounter difficulties in accessing education, in early marriage and pregnancy and in social and professional inequalities. A child born of a literate mother has a 50 per cent greater chance of living beyond five years of age. Women who have benefited from post-primary education are five times more likely than illiterate women to have information on HIV/AIDS. Almost two thirds of the 792 million illiterate individuals worldwide are women. In 2010, only 9 of 151 elected heads of State were women.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is a particularly important tool to counter discrimination against women. The implementation of States' commitments to this framework is absolutely essential. We must give priority to our young people, especially the young girls, in order to create a sustainable world and sustainable development, more just and without poverty.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Lungisa (South Africa): At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important meeting on youth. My Government attaches great importance to that important segment of our society.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the statement earlier in this meeting by Rwanda on behalf of the Africa Group, and the statement by Namibia on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (see A/65/PV.111).

We commend the United Nations for proclaiming the International Year of Youth, under the theme "Youth: Dialogue and mutual understanding". This provides an important opportunity to strengthen dialogue and mutual understanding among youth globally and to promote youth participation, and also to increase investment by Governments and the international community in young people through addressing the challenges that hinder their development.

Youth should be seen as agents of change and development. They should be at the forefront in addressing major societal challenges such as realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A quick glance at the eight Millennium Development Goals reveals that they are directly related to the well-being of children and young people. The MDGs provide for the need to address youth development, employment, maternal health and reducing exposure to HIV and AIDS. This indicates that the MDGs are in many respects youth development goals.

It is time for Member States to move from commitment to results-oriented actions. We should channel all our energies to youth development, since the youth are today's resources and tomorrow's leaders. We should remember that young people hold the key to society's future. Their ambitions, goals and aspirations for peace, security, development and human rights are often in accordance with those of society as a whole. The recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa are evidence that youth continue to play a vital role in the democratization of our countries.

The South African Government established the National Youth Development Agency in 2009 with a view to addressing issues affecting youth development. The establishment of the Agency illustrates the importance that South Africa places in youth issues. The Agency promotes coordination in youth development matters across all spheres of Government.

Last month, South Africa commemorated its National Youth Day on 16 June, which also marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of the 16 June 1976 uprising. This day continues to remind us about the contributions made by young people in the fight

against apartheid. We must continue recognizing the contributions that can be made by young people to their communities and society at the global level.

At the regional level, South Africa has ratified the African Youth Charter. During the recent African Union Summit — which was held under the theme "Accelerating Youth Development for Sustainable Development" — the African leaders agreed on international collaboration and cooperation as key elements in financing youth development priorities. A call was made to the development partners and all relevant stakeholders to align youth development-related programmes to the Youth Decade Plan of Action (2009-2018).

South Africa also supports a proposal agreed at subregional level on accelerating youth development through the establishment of a United Nations agency to initiate, fund and promote youth development priorities in Member States. This call has been made in view of the need to pool youth development resources in order to ensure greater impact.

Let us collectively, as Member States, avoid creating an island of success within an ocean of poverty. Our intervention on youth development should be measured not only by how individual countries have fared, but by the international commitments we have carried out to support youth development in our respective countries.

I wish to conclude by quoting the call from the late President Oliver Reginald Tambo, who said, "A nation that does not take care of its youth does not have a future and does not deserve one". In this regard, our words should translate into concrete and measurable action by making available the resources required and investing in programmes that are geared towards youth development.

We are also very happy that the United Nations Member States proclaimed 18 July as Nelson Mandela Day, when all must endeavour to serve 67 minutes in our own communities all over the world. We have celebrated that great day in South Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Vladzimir Shchastny, Chair of the Belarus National Commission for UNESCO and Ambassador-at-large of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Mr. Shchastny (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I wish to begin by expressing my country's heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the families and friends of the victims of the terrorist attacks that took place last Friday in Norway.

There is a traditional Belarusian saying that advises, "Preserve your dignity in your youth and you will not encounter trouble". The youth policy of the Government of Belarus is aimed at educating young people to feel responsible for their future and that of society as a whole. The principles of this policy were endorsed in a special law adopted in 2009 that provides for protection and enforcement of the rights and legitimate interests of young people; creation of conditions conducive to their free and effective participation in the development of society; social, material, legal and other support for young people; and empowerment of youth decision-making on matters concerning their future. Of particular importance in the Government youth policy is international cooperation. That is one reason that the Republic of Belarus consistently advocates for providing support to young people and developing their potential in the framework of the United Nations.

We commend the active engagement of relevant United Nations entities in carrying out various activities for youth, especially the establishment in 2010 of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, aimed at improving the effectiveness of United Nations activities in this sphere. Its results attest to the effectiveness of the network, which was coordinated in the past year by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNESCO.

However, along with interaction among United Nations entities, it is necessary to develop global partnerships on youth issues, with the participation of Member States, youth organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Only the concerted and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders can lead to the effective implementation of youth policies at the national and international levels.

Our country welcomes the convening of this timely High-level Meeting, which should explore current issues on the global youth agenda. In our opinion, as the International Year of Youth comes to an end, it is time to review the World Programme of Action for Youth. We need to update the priorities of

the World Programme of Action, adding such issues as migration, financial and economic crises and human trafficking. One result of this Meeting could be a recommendation to the General Assembly to forge a new global partnership for youth. During the 2010 Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, Belarus proposed creating a global partnership under the title "Help Future Generations Prosper", focused on investing in future global leadership by providing support to talented young people.

It is also crucial to tackle the social degradation of youth, in particular factors that lead to negative consequences for youth, even in highly developed countries. We advocate convening an interactive thematic discussion in the General Assembly on youth policies in the near future in order to continue the discussion and create new frameworks for international cooperation on youth issues.

In conclusion, I would like to express our delegation's satisfaction with the adoption by consensus of the outcome document of this High-level Meeting on Youth (resolution 65/312). The Republic of Belarus played an active part in negotiating the resolution and stands ready to implement the provisions of that important strategic document.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Ronan Farrow, Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Global Youth Issues of the United States of America.

Mr. Farrow (United States of America): I am very grateful to be here today and to be a part of this conversation as we confront what is both a great shared challenge and a great shared opportunity.

Now more than ever, as we all know, young people are at the very core of changing world events. More than 60 per cent of the world's population is under the age of 30. That demographic, increasingly empowered by the new technologies that we have discussed at this Meeting, is increasingly a potential driver of great economic and social reform. However, it is also the case that we all acknowledge that that demographic can be one of the great threats to national and international stability and security. Of all nations with new outbreaks of civil conflict, 86 per cent have significant majorities under the age of 30.

Those realities obviously are not lost on the countries represented in this Hall. I have had great conversations over the past several days with many people here, and many countries have made tremendous strides to attract the world's best and brightest youth to their job markets and universities.

Unfortunately, those realities have also not been lost on our shared adversaries. Extremist and criminal organizations also have sophisticated and comprehensive youth strategies, offering young people empowerment, a sense of belonging, a sense of political participation. Boys and young men are often the prime targets of such extremist recruitment, fuelling unrest around the world. Girls and young women are very often the most vulnerable victims of disenfranchisement and oppression, and an under-tapped resource in the fight for economic growth. All young people, as we have seen in the tragic events of recent days, can be targeted as they express their political rights. We stand in solidarity with Norway today.

President Obama said in his seminal Cairo speech in 2009:

> "[T]o young people of every faith, in every country — you, more than anyone, have the ability to remake this world".

But who gives them the tools to remake that world will profoundly affect security around the world and the prosperity of all of our nations. The ball is in our court. We cannot afford to wait.

Youth engagement has already been a priority at many United States embassies. We have developed effective approaches to interacting with young people, from exchange programmes to democracy training and development, health and livelihood programmes. We have sought to give young people a voice on the global stage. In December 2010, Ambassador Susan Rice chaired a Security Council meeting where youth set the agenda themselves — the first time that young people had an opportunity to influence the course of the most influential body on international peace and security.

Still, we recognized that the United States could be doing more. We needed to make challenging institutional changes at the very highest level. Last year, Secretary Clinton launched an exhaustive review of America's international youth policy and programming. That review was targeted at changing our capacity to empower the next generation of leaders. It resulted in a pledge to empower young people as

positive economic and civic actors through our programmes, to work hand in hand with countries like those represented in this Hall today to create enabling environments for youth in all of our borders, and to explore new ways to talk to and, perhaps most importantly, to listen to young people.

To oversee that historic effort, we are launching a new State Department Office of Global Youth Issues. It is my privilege to be leading that initiative as Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Global Youth Issues. The United States is focusing on economic empowerment, through programmes around the world that educate, create employment opportunities and foster entrepreneurship for young people, such as the Youth:Work programme, which has trained and employed thousands of young people in Latin America.

We are launching initiatives that encourage civic participation, create local leadership opportunities and develop linkages between young people and their Governments. One important example is the Yemen Student Councils Project, which has established councils for young people in hundreds of schools across that country, familiarizing people of that age group with community participation and the basics of democracy. We are pushing the envelope to involve young people in the execution of these programmes too, with successes like the Yes Youth Can programme in Kenya, which features an innovative youth-led and youth-managed social innovation fund.

Accompanying programmes like these around the world is a new focus on youth issues in our discussions with the international community. That conversation begins here and now. The United States welcomes and will continue to foster follow-on activities to ensure that it does not end this summer.

I look out at this Hall and I am excited, because I see a group of nations that understand this watershed moment and that stand poised to lead the response to it. Nigeria is one of them. It recently hosted the first African Urban Youth Assembly, gathering youth from across Africa to guide their leaders on urban development. Likewise, Brazil completed an 18-month youth dialogue, surveying young Brazilians about their views on democracy and their role in society. I also commend Austria and Benin, which acted as co-facilitators of that event.

This is a moment when we are prioritizing listening to young voices and responding to their call for action. It is the call to provide young people with access to livelihood and to employment, to promote gender and minority equality, and to confront the human rights abuses that so often drive and deepen poverty. That call, as I said, is both a challenge and an opportunity, and it is one we cannot wait to confront. The young people of our nations are, as we speak, transforming our security and prosperity. They are not just the future, as several have pointed out; they are now. We can work with them to create a better now.

I look forward to this event being just one of many catalysts in a long and fruitful process of joining hands with each other and with young people around the world, to accomplish just that.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. María Laura Braiza, National Director of Youth from the Ministry of Social Development of Argentina, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Ms. Braiza (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at this High-level Meeting on Youth, the highlight event of the International Year of Youth. The decision to hold this event originated with an initiative of the Group of 77 and China and with the constructive engagement of all Member States. We agreed to convene this important meeting and to produce a substantive outcome document (resolution 65/312), which will undoubtedly contribute to youth development.

The High-level Meeting's central theme "Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding" provides all of us — Member States, the United Nations system, youth organizations and other stakeholders — the opportunity to exchange views on the challenges related to youth, to discuss how best to address them and to commit to taking concrete action. The central theme of dialogue and mutual understanding should inspire all our efforts in this regard.

The Group of 77 and China would like to stress the need for further efforts to support young people in developing their potential and to tackle the obstacles they face. In this regard, the primary responsibility for ensuring youth development lies with States, which should develop comprehensive policies and action plans that focus on the best interests of youth. The Group of 77 and China encourages the international community to support Member States, through

enhanced international cooperation and the fulfilment of all their official development assistance commitments, in their efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve full employment and social integration.

Additionally, the Group of 77 and China reaffirms the importance of the World Programme of Action for Youth as the framework for youth policies, while recognizing the urgency of further developing it in order to fully address all the challenges that currently affect young people. The Group of 77 and China also acknowledges that the problems that young people face today must be dealt with in a broader context of coordinated action based on a holistic approach, directly addressing issues that encompass a vast range of multidimensional aspects. The very nature of the problems afflicting young people today demands such complementary actions as providing the best education possible, giving access to employment opportunities, enabling adequate food supplies and nutrition, creating a healthy physical and social environment, assuring the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and participation in decision-making processes.

Moreover, the Group firmly believes that by bridging gaps in every area of inequality — social, regional, racial, gender and others — we will make a significant contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Youth unemployment is a clear example of a challenge affecting young people that requires new ideas and renewed effort from Member States and the international community. Unemployment has become a global problem that affects young people all over the world. The Group of 77 and China urges all Member States to consider undertaking efforts to develop a global strategy for effectively addressing this issue.

The Group 77 and China underscores the need to ensure that all of our citizens, including our young people, enjoy the highest possible standards of health, and will continue to work to realize this objective. The Group also recognizes the importance of protecting young people from violence and crime and of preventing and addressing their involvement in criminal activity, including drug-related activity. These issues remain on our agenda as we strive to provide healthy environments for younger generations.

The Group of 77 and China urges Member States to take concerted action, in accordance with international law, to remove the obstacles to the full realization of the rights of young people living under foreign occupation, in order to promote achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Group also condemns the recruitment and use of young people in armed conflict, in contravention of relevant international law; deplores its negative consequences on the young people concerned; and calls on Member States, in cooperation with United Nations entities, to take concrete measures and continue to support programmes to ensure the effective social and economic reintegration and rehabilitation of demobilized young people.

The Group of 77 and China remains committed to working to improve the lives of young people in all our countries to help them realize their full potential and make valuable and positive contributions to the development of our societies.

Allow me to add a few words in my national capacity. The Government of Argentina is extending its public policies aimed at enabling young people to participate in society in various ways. We emphasize the importance of young people in building a country's future with greater levels of justice and equality, and in strengthening the democratic system, including them in the decision-making processes, particularly in Government institutions.

This generation will continue to be the standard bearers of human rights as a fundamental condition of life, and will continue to move forward with the discussion of the sovereign restitution of the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich islands. A generation that participates, as our President, Cristina Fernández Kirchner, has said, is essential to building an Argentina that is more inclusive and with greater solidarity. With commitment, passion and conviction, the young people of Argentina will continue to build a more equal society in the context of peace, human rights and sustainable development. We are proud of the words of our former President, Néstor Kirchner, when he said that when youth marches forward, change is inevitable.

In conclusion, we recall the fifty-ninth anniversary of the death of a great woman, a tireless fighter for social rights, Eva Duarte Perón — Evita, to the people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Berhane Gebre-Kristos, State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia.

Mr. Gebre-Kristos (Ethiopia): At the outset, I would like to join other speakers in expressing our condolences and deepest sympathy to the Government and people of Norway for their loss in the horrendous act of terrorism committed against them last Friday. Let me also offer my delegation's congratulations to the President of the Assembly for his successful organization of this High-level Meeting.

This meeting could not be more timely. The current global economic situation has created very precarious conditions for young people. Without hope for the future, young people cannot be expected to contribute viably to our societies, and ensuring peace and stability will be impossible if they continue to live without hope.

Africa is the most underdeveloped continent and home to the second largest youth population worldwide, after Asia. African youth have limited access to decent jobs and sustainable income. Indeed, Africa has shown promising progress in economic growth over the past decade, but the negative impact of the global economic situation on that progress over the past two years and the fact that growth has not been inclusive have resulted in insufficient progress to boost the hopes of young people.

Ensuring only the economic well-being of our young people and their social integration would be inadequate to fully addressing their needs. Their active participation in vital political reforms and the democratization process is also critical. They should be given a political space to pursue their political views and specific interests, and they need to be certain that their participation in addressing societal challenges will contribute to policy formulation and execution.

It is extremely important to emphasize the fact that a separate set of measures cannot serve to address youth challenges unless those measures, first and foremost, address the fundamental challenges of our societies. Moreover, it must be underlined that actions taken solely at the national level will not yield the desired results unless they are supplemented by international cooperation.

In the light of this self-evident fact, my delegation calls on the international community to implement the internationally agreed development goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals, in a timely fashion to overcome the development challenges of the developing countries. It is therefore my delegation's belief that what is needed now is not new strategies, but rather the necessary political commitment to deliver on our promises.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Fanny Hermenier, President of the Committee on Education of Monaco.

Ms. Hermenier (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to convey my sincere condolences and sympathy to the people and Government of Norway following the tragedy they have suffered. I also thank the General Assembly and the Government of the Principality of Monaco for providing me with the unique opportunity to speak before the Assembly today and to dialogue with young people from all regions of the world.

The outcome document adopted by the Assembly (resolution 65/312) is a decisive step towards a better understanding on the part of every Member State of the core role that young people should play in implementing the objectives of the United Nations at the national and international levels.

George Bernanos wrote:

> "It is the fever of young people that keeps the world temperature stable. When young people cool down, the rest of the world feels the chill."

It is that feverish youth yearning for democracy, human rights and justice who have paved the way for new regimes. Indeed, the Arab Spring would have been impossible without young people, whose essential role has been widely lauded and emphasized.

Those protest movements and uprisings also reflect the staunch will of young people to actively participate at all levels of decision-making to establish their role in the transition towards a modern and democratic society. Moreover, young people also have an instrumental role to play in international organizations so that decisions taken will include their point of view, in particular in the framework of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which call for joint efforts that must include youth participation.

My country, like others, is working to reduce disparities and inequalities among young people across the world through official development assistance. Monaco's cooperation supports efforts to gain universal access to education, without discrimination, through the financing of cultural centres or educational programmes for poor youth living in shantytowns or children of refugees.

Moreover, the Principality has developed student exchange partnerships that create opportunities for young people in developing countries to participate in training programmes in Monegasque institutions, in order to promote knowledge transfer and sharing and to bring young people together from different cultures.

Health care and countering malnutrition are concerns that should be considered essential to the well-being of future generations and societies. It is absolutely unacceptable that children and young people continue to die each day of hunger and treatable diseases due to lack of access to care or treatment. That is one reason that Monaco has cooperated in efforts to prioritize intervention efforts in the health sector.

Finally, I underscore that the rights of children and young people should not be abridged. Young people and children are by definition among the most vulnerable populations and too often silent victims of serious violence. In that context, States must respect their commitments undertaken in regional and international organizations. On 20 and 21 November, the Principality of Monaco will host a conference on "Building a Europe for and with children", under the auspices of the Council of Europe, where discussions with participating children will be centred primarily on defining a new European strategy on the rights of the child.

Our youth does not blind us to the shocking, cruel and unjust realities of the world we live in. We are the Internet generation. Thanks to social networks, blogs and virtual communities, we are aware of the injustice, despair and decadence confronting members of our generation who may sometimes live far from us and our daily concerns. Let us recognize this irreversible interdependence and establish dialogues among cultures.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Pierre Maudet, President of the Federal Commission on Youth of Switzerland.

Mr. Maudet (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland joins the many others who have spoken in expressing its profound condolences to the Norwegian people following the recent tragedy.

Switzerland believes that the effective participation of young people will guarantee their social integration and a sustainable future for society. Switzerland has established various participatory mechanisms, such as youth parliaments, and encourages similar initiatives.

The Swiss National Youth Council, founded in 1933, is the oldest such national body in Europe. Switzerland has been participating since 2003 in the United Nations youth delegate programme. Including young people in participatory processes, preparing them to assume responsibility and familiarizing them with democratic institutions and processes will also help to curb their lack of interest in politics, in particular in the developed countries, where youth disengagement has achieved record levels. Every country must promote training on youth and human rights.

The sustainable and social integration of young people also requires quality training and efforts to curtail unemployment and temporary employment. A lack of opportunities for young people can lead to social tensions and conflict. Dignified and well-remunerated employment, a stable situation and security are prerequisites to raising a family and building a life. Five of the eight Millennium Development Goals require investment in young people, who are particularly vulnerable.

Education, training and innovation are the pillars of our economic, social and environmental development. Policies should counter unemployment and support job placement and appropriate training with a view to lifelong and life-wide learning.

Switzerland has taken measures to ensure employment for young people who have completed training and to fund training for the unemployed. Information and communications technology is a fantastic tool to promote the participation and integration of young people in society by creating links and bridges and by contributing to learning about democracy and human rights with a view to creating an open society for all, with education and training opportunities. It places young people at the centre of action for democratic change and progress.

Switzerland underscores the importance of information and communications technology and encourages the provision and facilitation of affordable access, particularly for disenfranchised youth — especially in developing countries — while taking steps to protect against related risks. In that respect, our country, working together with the private sector, launched a national programme aimed at the protection of children and youth in the area of media and information technology.

Cooperation on the part of the various stakeholders involved and the participation of youth are of key importance at the local, national and international levels if we are to attain the Millennium Development Goals and implement the World Programme of Action for Youth, which remain pivotal in guiding our efforts.

In times of crisis, youth-related policies are at risk. They must not be relegated to the sidelines. Sufficient resources must be allocated to them, and periodic progress assessments carried out. The outcome document is action-oriented, and today's statements must be translated into tomorrow's actions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Severine Macedo, National Secretary for Youth Affairs of Brazil.

Ms. Macedo (Brazil) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I should like at the outset to acknowledge the presence of Ambassador Maria Luiza Viotti, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, and that of the Executive Director of UNFPA, Babatunde Osotimehin. I should also like in particular to extend my greetings to the young people here and to those who, even at a distance, are following this important Meeting.

We are very pleased to participate in this Meeting. Brazil, which is now experiencing a positive growth trend, believes that economic, social and environmental development is inextricably linked to youth-related public policies.

In that context, recognition of the diversity of youth is non-negotiable. We are young people from the city and from the countryside — which I call home; we are young blacks, Indians, whites and Asians; we are young women and men; we are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and heterosexual; we are young people with and without disabilities; we are young people from different social classes whose inequalities are decreasing each year; we are young people with different cultural backgrounds and experiences; we are young people who experiment with the most diverse rhythms, colours and artistic creations; we are youth who promote citizenship on our territories; and we are the ones who are connected to the world through social networks. We are the first generation of the twenty-first century, but, above all, we are young people who live in peace and are building a country that is developing democratically.

In Brazil, a country of about 190 million people, 50 million of us are between the ages of 15 and 29. This demographic dividend can increase production, per capita income, savings and investment and bolster the social protection network, expanding production and the protection of rights.

Under the administration of President Dilma Rousseff, the first woman to hold the highest office in the executive branch, Brazil has undertaken the task of consolidating the legacy of former President Lula with regard to growth and income distribution. Now our focus is to eradicate poverty. We believe that a rich country is a country without poverty, and that in order to achieve that goal, investing in youth is fundamental.

The International Year of Youth has demonstrated that young people deserve higher priority on the multilateral agenda. The Year is coming to an end, but we know that the challenges will continue. The international agenda should incorporate young people, both in specific policies and in cross-cutting areas. In this respect, Brazil has sought to make its contribution through South-South cooperation projects.

Finally, we reiterate the importance of seeing young people as individuals deserving of rights and as strategic agents for sustainable and cooperative development. It is essential to invest in the promotion of decent work, education at all levels and the prevention of violence. We must also make advances in terms of ensuring other rights, including the right to political participation and freedom of movement, affirmative action, and the rights to leisure, culture, ownership, quality of life, diversity and security.

We want, and are working to build, a better and more equal world for all; to that end, it is imperative to invest in youth, especially in developing countries. This better and more equal world will be a reality only

when we are certain that the generational transition will be based on the empowerment of youth and when young people have the autonomy to forge their own destinies.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Lilli Attallah, Member of the Executive Board of the National Council of Youth of Egypt.

Ms. Attallah (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin my statement by expressing my delegation's heartfelt condolences to the people and the Government of Norway in connection with the lives lost in the abhorrent terrorist attack in that country a few days ago. The Government and the people of Egypt stand in solidarity with the people of Norway against terrorism.

The convening of this High-level Meeting on Youth, organized to celebrate the International Year of Youth, is of particular significance owing to the fact that 2011 has witnessed youth revolutions, particularly in the Arab region. The Arab spring, inspired by Arab youth, made clear the critical role youth can play in their societies at all levels. They have an essential role to play in their countries at all levels, and efforts must be made to meet the challenges that hamper their development throughout the world.

The majority of the world's young people live in the developing countries and thus are the most affected by the global financial and economic crises as well as by the other challenges that hinder their access to education, decent work, health care and housing.

Despite the efforts made by developing countries through their strategies and programmes aimed at meeting the increasing needs of their young people, the latter continue to suffer from poverty, marginalization, unemployment and consequently are at risk of being exploited in various ways, including in the context of organized crime, human trafficking, irregular migration and armed conflicts.

These challenges require that all Member States fully implement their national plans of action aimed at accelerating youth development, in accordance with youth-related internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; with the support of donor countries, international financial institutions and the United Nations system; and without conditionality. It is important that the private sector and civil society be instrumental in this regard.

We in Egypt believe that the outcome document of this High-level Meeting (resolution 65/312) draws an action-oriented path in this connection. We thus stress the importance of its full implementation, particularly the development of a global strategy on youth employment and the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Egypt considers that world youth face several main challenges that today, most importantly social and economic development and political participation. Egypt remains strongly committed today to taking the necessary steps towards the social development of all Egyptians as part of a people-centred development strategy, while placing young people at the top of our national priorities.

The Government of Egypt is striving to implement its national strategies and programmes for youth, and expresses its appreciation to the international community for its technical and financial support of such strategies.

Through the Egyptian revolution, the country's young people have proved that they are a force for change and are able to participate in national policy reform. We are committed to meeting the challenges and achieving national goals and objectives to ensure a decent life for Egyptians, especially the young people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Miguel Ángel Carreón Sánchez, Director of the National Institute of Youth of Mexico.

Mr. Carreón Sánchez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express on behalf of Mexico our condolences to and solidarity with the people and the Government of Norway for the tragic events that occurred last week.

Currently, over 200 million youth live on less than a dollar a day, 88 million are unemployed, 160 million suffer from malnutrition, 130 million have not had access to basic levels of education, and 10 million live with HIV/AIDS. We should not wait any longer to change this reality and adapt our development strategies to consider youth as active agents of development in our societies.

The world is populated by more than one billion young people between 15 and 29 years of age — a

figure never seen before at any time in history. We have an historic global opportunity, because we have a demographic bonus that should be used. In Mexico, young people comprise a third of the total population. Together with the largest countries in Latin America, we have demographic bonus that we should take advantage of in order to build and strengthen the political, economic and social infrastructure that we need.

Knowledge and access to better jobs is the largest responsibility. The foundation for work is knowledge, and that will be even more the case in the future. Our educational systems are therefore based on this perspective — perhaps not enough, but at least the pedagogical models are being revised, and that process should be deepened.

This is one of the big challenges of our generation: to prepare ourselves to fully live in the knowledge era, but above all to guarantee access to knowledge and the right to information for each person wherever he or she might be.

It is true that we, the young people, have to think of the future while living in the present. It is thus essential that from the demographic bonus to which we have already referred we must also be able to generate a financial culture sustained by savings so that social security systems are capable of supporting the demand that we will have in the future.

The key element of our efforts should be to create spaces for active and effective participation of young people in all areas that affect them. In the case of my country, the National Institute of Youth of Mexico promotes the youth perspective in the action of the Government. Above all, it promotes the participation of youth. In the last four years, we have actively encouraged over a thousand projects of youth organizations. At the multilateral level, Mexico has been part of Youth Delegates programme since 2004. The premise is simple: we need to build a joint agenda with the young people, and not impose a fixed view.

Mexico considers it essential to tackle and achieve the Millennium Development Goals and subsequent agreements in areas related to the development of youth. That will enable the results to be sustainable in the medium- and long term.

For this reason my country reaffirms its commitment to the World Programme of Action for Youth and its effective implementation. We are confident that the Secretary-General will present in the report requested in this Meeting's outcome document (resolution 65/312) specific proposals to follow up on the 15 areas of action and the measures that can be taken to strengthen the work of the United Nations system for youth.

The International Year of Youth, which will end in a few days, has enabled us to give greater visibility to the needs and challenges that young people face today. In recent months, various activities and events on youth were carried out on all levels. The Government of Mexico, working with the United Nations system, contributed to this effort by organizing the World Youth Conference, which was held in August 2010 in León, Guanajuato, Mexico. The Conference was attended by 106 delegates and nearly 4,000 young people. It promoted a dialogue between Government, civil society and youth organizations.

The world will be what its youth will be — we reap what we sow. It is time to stop understanding youth as a physical state and start seeing it with a vision of ongoing life. It is time to return to taking decisions thinking of the present and future generations. It is time for us to put the person and his essence at the centre of public policies. It is time to take the best of our past to build the best of our future and make a better place to live.

The President (*spoke in French*): Let me remind the Assembly that each Member State has three minutes in which to speak when taking the floor. If the text of a prepared statement is longer than that, it should be adapted to fit into this time limit, as that will allow for a maximum number of Member States to take the floor.

I now give the floor to Ms. Sofia Pain, Chief of Intergovernmental Relations and the Promotion of International Activity at the Ministry of Youth of Italy.

Ms. Pain (Italy): First of all, I wish to join the other speakers in expressing our condolences to the Government and the people of Norway.

Italy endorses the statement that will be delivered by the European Union and wishes to make a few additional remarks.

Dialogue and mutual understanding are crucial to the positive development of our societies, as they contribute to political, social, cultural and economic

integration and to the cohesion of those who are culturally diverse. Young people can play an important role in further promoting cooperation, participation, tolerance and respect for others in every region of the world. The World Programme of Action for Youth is a fundamental point of reference at the international level to achieve those goals.

For these reasons, Italy attaches great importance to the development of young generations in terms of their potential, their personal and professional skills and their ability to actively participate in social life. This is demonstrated by the presence of two representatives of the National Youth Forum in the Italian delegation at this Meeting.

Currently, the unemployment, poverty and social exclusion linked to the ongoing world financial crisis are serious barriers to the active participation of young people in society, especially for those in vulnerable situations or at risk of exclusion. The Italian Government — also thanks to the action of a young Minister of Youth — has taken steps to offer more opportunities for professional growth. They include more effective coordination and integration among the sectors of education, training and the labour market; the adoption of mechanisms to finance young entrepreneurs for business start-ups, especially in the new technologies and green sectors; investments in training; and orientation for students.

The Italian Government is thus promoting various initiatives that offer young people crucial knowledge about civic duties and opportunities for active participation in democratic life. This is key to the development of dialogue and mutual understanding in civil society, and it echoes the main theme of this International Year of Youth.

A greater role can be played by non-formal and informal learning opportunities offered to young people by youth, volunteer and non-governmental organizations. Joint action with United Nations and European bodies should have as their main goal the concrete development of quality, standardized, non-formal and informal learning. We believe that the prerequisites for dialogue and mutual understanding must be learned, practiced and maintained all our lives.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Bianka Paola Hernández, Director of the National Council of Youth of Guatemala.

Ms. Hernández (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala is one of the slowest countries in Latin America in terms of its demographic transition. The cohort from birth to 14 years of age makes up 31.8 per cent of our total population, compared to an average of 20.8 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. Those aged between 15 and 24 — those whom we consider as "youth" — make up another 19.8 per cent of the total population. While the relative percentage of Guatemalans from birth to 14 years is tending to fall over time, which is to be expected at this stage of our transition, the opposite is true of the 15-to-24-year-old segment, which is increasing.

These phenomena are having a profound impact on our current health and education services, as well as noticeable repercussions for the labour markets and Guatemalans' quality of life. Today, Guatemala's economy simply does not generate sufficient jobs to absorb our young people. While we have made a great deal of progress in improving the reach and quality of our educational system, we are still not keeping enough young people in that system, including at the secondary level.

The present Administration has tried to deal with this situation in the widest context, by giving the highest priority to assisting the lowest-income and most vulnerable strata of the population. The emphasis has been on generating productive jobs, particularly in small and medium-sized businesses, with the goal of offering a better future to those students who leave or drop out of the educational system and seek to enter the job market without resorting to emigration. We have also launched a series of initiatives focused on Guatemala's young people through the National Council for Youth, which I have the honour to lead, and which is the institution charged with coordinating, proposing and promoting public policies for youth.

Since the present Administration began, the Government of Guatemala has promoted social policies capable of achieving concrete transformations in the reality of life for young Guatemalans, based on solidarity and generating creative and innovative programmes such as Open Schools, Safe Schools, Solidarity Scholarships and Civil Service, among others. The Open Schools presidential programme offers alternative spaces for weekend activities for young people that promote identity and a sense of belonging. Based on a non-formal education model, these transform traditional schools into spaces that

allow the exchange of experiences through the development and discovery of young people's diverse capacities.

These and other efforts are built around the National Youth Policy 2010-2015, "Building a multicultural, inclusive and equitable nation", which responds to the particular demands of young people in their quest for opportunity and for economic, political and social development. That plan conforms fully to the World Programme of Action for Youth set out in resolution 50/81, which, though adopted in 1995, is still very relevant.

Aware of the importance of investing in young people and giving them the opportunity and the scope to take on appropriate leadership roles, at this High-level Meeting on Youth we as a country would like to bring about agreement on development with equity and with equal conditions and without discrimination. We must build collectively and with participation, taking the necessary steps for sustained support of Governments and of every sector, so as to create integrated policies and actions that continue to invest in young people in order to create more and better opportunities.

Lastly, we recognize that young people want to belong, to participate and to be actors in their own history. There must be mutual dialogue and an understanding that includes young people and recognizes them as actors in their own process of development and as fully entitled to share in opportunities for access and genuine conditions for participation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Jan Vanhee, Director of the International Youth Policy Support Center of Belgium.

Mr. Vanhee (Belgium): We offer our condolences to the people and State of Norway.

Belgium associates itself with the statement of the European Union.

After this High-level Meeting on Youth, there will be no way back with regard to taking young men and women seriously in our societies. We must create structures and mechanisms at all levels, from neighbourhoods to municipalities, to regions and nations, and even internationally, in order to advance and strengthen as much as possible young people's participation in the decision-making processes that affect them. Independent youth councils are a good and sustainable example. This was mentioned yesterday in a discussion between our colleagues from the European Youth Forum and various other countries.

It is time to act. Even in these difficult days, we must examine how we can strengthen our support and contribute financially to youth structures and organizations at all levels.

There is still a long way to go in improving the participation and development of young people. We are convinced that the more we do, the better it will be for the quality of our governance. For example, in the Youth Department of the Council of Europe — which is a structure linking the youth sector and governmental bodies having shared possibilities in the youth field — we see how co-management is functioning. We are also trying to implement structured dialogue in the European Union. These are good examples.

Nevertheless, there are some critical issues to be solved, such as the recognition of youth organizations, youth non-governmental organizations, youth work and a non-formal education sector. We have to recognize that young people are an integral part of an increasingly complex society. They are shaped by a variety of influences and environments: the home, families, communities, school, the workplace, peers and the media. In that context, youth work can play an important role in young people's development and participation. We must also focus more energy on involving young people who live in poverty and/or at risk of social exclusion.

Youth policy and youth development should also be knowledge- and evidence-based. We have to make more joint efforts to build a real and strong youth coalition at all levels, all over the world, together with young people, youth organizations, workers, leaders, researchers, policymakers and other experts in the field of youth, as well as the private and third sectors.

Our thanks go to you, Mr. President, and to your colleagues, for making this meeting possible. We hope that there will soon be another at which there will be more places, space and opportunities to share our aims and opinions with young people and their organizations. I hope that we can work together to guarantee the implementation and follow-up of this outcome document (resolution 65/312) and of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Benson Saulo, Youth Ambassador for Australia.

Mr. Saulo (Australia): As the 2011 Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations, it gives me great pleasure to represent the views, hopes and optimism of the youth of Australia in today's discussion. I am the first Aboriginal Australian to be appointed as the Youth Representative since the position began in 1999. It is not only a great honour but a wonderful reflection on the young people of Australia, who want to promote and support an inclusive and equal society.

I am proud to say that Australian youth and the Australian Government share a common vision, which is reflected in the commitments laid out in our National Strategy for Young Australians:

> "for all young people grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient and to have the opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence decisions that affect them".

Our National Strategy identifies eight key priorities. Health, education and empowering young people to have a voice and be active in their communities are some of the key issues.

I am a firm believer that access to relevant, formal, informal and alternate education is key to address areas that continue to affect Australian youth in all areas of society, including overcoming disadvantage and influencing the current and future direction of our nation.

In the recent "Listen to Children" report produced by UNICEF Australia, it is noted that

> "there are specific groups of children who are not always afforded the same educational opportunities as other students, denying the capacity to fulfil their potential. These groups include: Aboriginal children; ... children from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds; ... and children with a disability."

During my national tour, I visited a small school in a remote town in Northern Territory, a part of Australia that has particular focus on closing the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians in the key indicators of life expectancy, employment and educational outcomes. The principal walked me around the school and informed me that no student had graduated from high school in that town for the past seven years. As we continued, he then pointed out three young girls and a young male, in year eight. He said that those four students had the potential to be the first in their school — the first in their town — to graduate from school and break the cycle of disadvantage within the town.

Beyond our shores, Australia is focused on supporting education programmes throughout Asia, the Pacific and the world, including a strong focus on disabilities. In our region, Australia provides support for the transition from primary to secondary schooling for children with hearing impairment and intellectual disabilities. We are also producing disability inclusion infrastructure guidelines for schools.

The UNICEF "Listen to Children" report also recommended that Australia establish an independent National Commissioner with the specific responsibility of setting up the strategic direction for youth-based policy development. That will be the next big step for Australia and will ensure that young people's voices are heard and that youth services are adequately resourced and implemented. The National Commissioner for Children will also complement the youth peak bodies and youth forums currently engaging young people and advocating on their behalf.

While there are many challenges and obstacles that face young people today, a sense of optimism for the future is evident. I encourage each Member State to continue strengthening dialogue with the youth in their nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Ms. Lee Bok Sil, Assistant Minister, Youth and Family Policy Office of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea.

Ms. Lee Bok Sil (Republic of Korea): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to offer my deepest condolences to the victims of the terrorist attacks in Norway and to their families. The Republic of Korea strongly condemns the violence that took away innocent young lives and expresses solidarity with the people of Norway.

We are here today at this crucial gathering to ensure the best interests of youth. My delegation believes that through this High-level Meeting political

leadership will be strengthened to take further steps towards the full implementation of international strategies, including the 1995 World Programme of Action for Youth.

My delegation is of the view that full and effective participation of young people in decision-making processes contributes not only to the empowerment of their political capacity but also to sustainable socio-economic development. In this connection, the Korean Government provides institutional foundations for young people to directly join the decision-making process and to present policy proposals by operating the 430 Youth Participation Committee at the local level and the Youth Special Conferences at the national level. My Government also continues to dispatch youth representatives to the General Assembly and other United Nations entities to further facilitate communication between young people and the United Nations system.

Recognizing the need to take a comprehensive approach toward youth issues, the Korean Government has launched a series of initiatives under the Master Plan for Youth Policy, which is updated every five years. The Plan, which is implemented by all relevant ministries and local authorities under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, encompasses various policy areas including human rights, education, employment and welfare.

We also believe that the role of civil society, youth-led organizations and the partnership among relevant stakeholders should be considered vital in protecting young-people from violence and crime and in fostering a youth-friendly society. For that reason, my Government enforces youth policies in addressing the alarming increase in Internet addiction among youth, in collaboration with civil society and the media.

My delegation fully supports the development of indicators linked to the World Programme of Action for Youth and the proposed goals and targets. We are convinced that they could play a critical role in evaluating the current situation and in designing a concrete action plan for youth. Furthermore, such development will contribute to the overall progress towards internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

We expect that the future-oriented strategies put forward in this Meeting will be transferred into reality in the coming years, bringing visible changes in development and in quality of life, not only for young people but also for society as a whole. My Government would like to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to continuously participate in the international efforts for the development of youth, in close cooperation with the United Nations and other Member States.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Ignacio Naudon, Director of the National Institute for Youth of Chile.

Mr. Naudon (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset I would like to convey to the delegation of Norway the deepest condolences of the youth of Chile for the massacre in their country last weekend.

Despite our countries' efforts, in almost all of our countries youth remains the population group most beset by social problems. Young people are the most affected by unemployment, abuse of alcohol and drugs and unplanned pregnancy, among others. There are doubtless many reasons to explain this reality, but today I would like to address one of them: the limited participation of our young people in our political systems.

Figures show that in general, the group that participates the least in decision-making processes is young people. Very few young people participate in our political parties, form part of our Governments or vote in our elections.

That separation between young people and politics is partly due to a generation's deep mistrust of political systems that at times are not able to effectively take up its views and positions. Such systems often reduce young people to mere beneficiaries of public policy and do not acknowledge them as participants. Many times these systems focus on protecting weaknesses but do little in capacity-building. The result is that the low level of participation of young people means inadequate reflection of their issues and concerns in public policy priorities, and thus a lack of concrete solutions and responses.

Therefore, if we truly wish to solve the issues facing young people, any social initiative that we undertake must be accompanied by an aggressive policy of promoting participation. It is unthinkable to claim, and to believe, that youth issues can enter and, above all, remain the priority of public policy unless

we make progress in resolutely promoting the incorporation of young people into our political systems.

When I say promote participation, I am not merely referring to forming bodies to hear views. I mean full and effective participation in drawing up, implementing and evaluating public policies. In other words, our generation does not want youth parliaments, but to participate in real parliaments, where real laws are drawn up.

Let us not make the mistake of reducing youth policies only to resolving issues affecting young people. That approach is doomed to failure.

To conclude, I call on our generation to uphold politics as the place where great changes take place. And if politics does not always function as we wish or does not have all the space that we would like, let us not stand by. Let us act. Let us be the agents of change and let us create the space.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Matías Rodríguez, Director of the National Institute of Youth of the Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay.

Mr. Rodríguez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Uruguay, it is truly a pleasure to be participating in this world conference on youth.

I too would like to express our condolences on the unfortunate events in Norway.

In our country, some of the most worrisome and alarming social indicators of our society have historically been concentrated in the youngest generations. The main issues or challenges that the Uruguayan youth still face are those linked to the reduction of youth poverty, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and education, in particular, improving education sustainability, reintegration and completion of education cycles.

Related challenges are reducing the rate of youth unemployment, as well as improving training opportunities, vocational training and placement in decent jobs. Despite Uruguay's growing economy, there is high youth unemployment. It is triple the overall unemployment rate and is strongly evident in the group aged 18 to 24 years.

With great pride, we can also note that that trend has begun to reverse since the beginning of 2005. Since then, the main challenge has been and continues to be making progress in reconfiguring a new social protection matrix and strengthening a modern social assistance and inclusion network. The process allowed for a clear redirection of social public spending towards the youngest generations. That was seen in the increase in the education budget to 4.5 per cent of gross domestic product and through the implementation of a body of reforms, such as the equity plan, health-care reform, tax reform and the new family allowance system.

In that context, we have drawn up and launched the implementation of the National Youth Plan. That Plan clearly sets out four priorities: first, linking inclusion and education sustainability; secondly, improving training opportunities and employment; thirdly, promoting the participation, leading role and training of young people; and fourthly, promoting coordinated and linked youth policies, applying the youth perspective across all policy sectors.

While thus noting challenges and problems facing young people, it is also possible to say that in our country, there are thousands of young people who study, work, practice sports, pursue science, participate in cultural and artistic programmes and devote hours of their lives developing solidarity, defending rights and protecting the environment.

Clearly, as actors linked to youth policies, we all have a huge role to play in overcoming the problems and obstacles facing young people in order to ensure their development, as well as their enormous capacity to build responses that guarantee the exercise of their full rights. However, we must also focus on the social and emblematic place that we give young people in our societies.

Currently in Uruguay, we are seeing a strong conservative campaign that seeks to portray young people in the worst light, associating them only with threats, fear, crime, drugs and violence. That paradigm has led to iron-fist projects, doomed to fail, to ensure supposed safety. Such proposals are expensive, ineffective, counterproductive and regressive from a human rights perspective, as they violate the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for example.

We are absolutely convinced that societies that fear and do not believe in or trust young people, or simply do not expect anything from them, are doomed to fail because they lose the creativity, innovation,

sense of transformation and commitment of young people.

For all those reasons, we hope and are convinced that this world meeting on youth will greatly help to bring about a new political agenda that will make it possible to improve the position of public policies on youth, budgets, institution-building and strategic plans. However, above all, we reaffirm that in public policies relating to young people there is no place for mistrust and fear of youth, but only for the leading role, trust and participation of young people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Miguel Angel Pereira, Executive Director of the National Council of Youth of El Salvador.

Mr. Pereira (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to convey a very special greeting from El Salvador to all young people from all over the world who are at this High-level Meeting or who are tuning in through the Internet or various media. In addition, we wish to loudly applaud each of them in their countries, every young person of each country who is tuning in or is at this meeting, to ensure that each leader is sitting down to discuss public youth policies that we should implement. Each should commit to truly developing policies to integrate young people in society.

In El Salvador, we are working on a national youth policy, drawn up by grassroots youth organizations with the participation of more than 8,000 young people from all municipalities that comprise our dear El Salvador.

In reality, as a Government, we recognize that the greatest wealth of Latin America, in particular El Salvador, is not gold or oil. It is the young people of the entire world, who today make up our well-known demographic asset and of whom we Governments can take advantage.

I would also like to underscore that the Government of El Salvador recently established the National Council of Youth, within which, on the instruction of the President of the Republic, Mauricio Funes Cartagena, a Council of Ministers was established to exclusively address youth issues. I dare say that we are the only country in Latin America where there is a council of ministers to exclusively address youth issues.

If truth be told, we are working hard to change those policies that are too heavy-handed, in order to move towards policies with an intelligent touch that address youth affairs from a rights-based approach, but that also identify young people as the real strategic actors for development in our country and — why not say it? — globally.

The question we should ask ourselves, as policymakers for young people, is, in terms of this High-level Meeting, what will they get out of it? What will be the concrete proposal that we, the Governments, can take home to our countries?

As a representative of the Government of El Salvador, I will take the Secretary-General at his word when he said yesterday (110th meeting) that much has been done for young people, but that it is still not enough. And since it is not enough, we, the Government of El Salvador, recognize that today we must definitively support young people, and the best way to do that is through education. For that reason it is important that we see the creation within the United Nations system of a fund or programme for scholarships for the poorest countries or the poorest young people, whom of course we see in all our countries.

In El Salvador, we are focusing on young people as the centre of our social policies. And we will continue to do so, with the help of God, with an intelligent touch, with the wisdom of our President, Don Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Amos Issac, Under Secretary General at the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture of Niger.

Mr. Issac (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I would like to join other delegations who have spoken before me in offering to the Government and people of Norway our condolences on the tragedy they have experienced.

I would like to thank Their Excellencies Mr. Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou and Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, the Permanent Representatives of, respectively, Benin and Austria, the facilitators of this meeting, who have worked so hard to ensure our success.

Most of the studies of the formulation and implementation of national youth policies agree that the majority of Niger's population is young. Due to its demographic weight, this stratum of society is one of

the fundamental resources for the sustainable construction and development of our country. Niger is working on its social and economic paradigms, since the highest authorities are more convinced than ever that young people are not the problem but rather the solution to our economic and social development.

Moreover, this situation has had the corollary result of the creation in Niger of a collaborative framework conducive to involving young people in the development process, through the creation in 2006 of the National Council for Youth and its regional branches, which can be seen to have brought real momentum to this area. An inter-ministerial technical committee for youth affairs has been established, and we have implemented a process of decentralization and transfer of the management of socio-educational structures for young people to local communities.

These efforts to respond to young people's various concerns are the result of the political will of the Niger authorities, the adoption of the National Charter for Youth, and the Youth Policy Declaration. Through this new youth policy, the Government has reaffirmed its willingness to ensure the fulfilment of young people's material and intellectual needs. The national youth policy is the Government's political demonstration of its effort to create a guiding instrument for the long-term that can promote the emergence and support of a generation of young people who are the true engines of the country's development.

Thus article 24 of the Niger Constitution states that young people are protected by the State and other public institutions from exploitation and abandonment. The State provides for young people's material and intellectual growth as well as promoting their training and employment and their entry into the job market.

In this regard, we have taken the following actions based on the strategic plan and youth employment promotion programme. We have established the management and executive bodies for a strategic national plan. We have strengthened the capacity of youth frameworks in the area of management and administration of socio-educational institutions and strengthened the capacities of young people in management of their associations and organizations. We have implemented the youth employment promotion programme with a view to creating 50,000 jobs by 2015 and have strengthened the plan for promoting entrepreneurship among young people.

Those are some of the important elements of the Government of Niger's actions concerning young people that we wished to share with all the participants here today.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Ricardo Ibarra, Adviser at the National Youth Institute of Spain.

Mr. Ibarra (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for us to participate in this meeting.

This International Year has shown that there are many opportunities for young people. At the same time we have seen that the challenges we must confront are even greater. Young people face the highest levels of poverty and unemployment and the greatest difficulty in accessing education, health care and culture resources, and there are very high levels of other indicators of problems. We can definitely say that they are living in precarious situations. These circumstances have worsened as the result of an economic and financial crisis that has largely affected young people. It is something that must not happen again, and it is therefore necessary to regulate the flow of international capital.

It is important that in order to transform these circumstances, Governments and civil society must affirm their commitment to the absolute necessity of creating effective youth policies, not just because they affect a significant part of the population, but also because they are crucial to building our future societies. Betting on young people is a double investment, since it is both an investment in our present and, above all, in our future.

Fostering the participation of young people is also essential. Participation becomes a powerful tool for helping our youth policies succeed and is also an end in itself, since it allows us to develop youth groups that will foster the practice and learning essential to an active democratic society.

But for youth to participate they must not merely have the opportunity, they must also have the necessary training. We must therefore work on participation through education in informal as well as formal settings. This requires greater support and recognition of informal settings.

We must create a culture of participation that begins in early childhood, participation that requires the ability to form opinions and the ability to make decisions, to execute and evaluate. We must develop structures that channel young people and increase dialogue with civil society, such as those in the European Union, through structured dialogue among youth leaders and political leaders.

Above all, Governments must continue to build and contribute to the strengthening of civil society and the development of representative platforms such as the independent national youth councils. Such structures allow young people to voice their problems, but also to offer solutions and be involved in implementing them.

As I said at the start, there are many challenges that we must address when we discuss young people. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) include many challenges that affect young people. Since it is cross-cutting, I would like to mention MDG 3 — the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Young people in general tend to live in unjust situations, but it is young females who suffer the most. Women are essential and fundamental actors in the pursuit of the MDGs, and are often the most affected when the Goals are not met. If we focus on achieving progress and true equality for women, we will achieve results in all the other MDGs. Efforts to ensure the rights of women must be accompanied by a formal recognition of the rights of youth, as has happened in Africa and Ibero-America, inter alia.

I wish to conclude by reiterating Spain's commitment to improving the quality of life for youth, its congratulations to all stakeholders involved in this undertaking, and its hope that we will continue to work on this key issue.

Finally, we would like to express our condolences to the people of Norway in connection with the recent tragedy they experienced.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Teddy Mulonga, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development of Zambia.

Mr. Mulonga (Zambia): The Government and the people of the Republic of Zambia express their condolences to the Government and the people of Norway on the tragic incident that led to the loss of lives, including those of young people. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families.

Zambia is pleased to participate in this important High-level Meeting, whose theme, "Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding," provides us with an opportunity to share ideas and exchange views on the challenges facing young people.

My delegation in this regard aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the representative of Rwanda on behalf of the African Union, and the representative of Namibia on behalf of the Southern Africa Development Community.

The Zambian Government considers young people to be the foundation of sustainable development. Therefore, the development and utilization of human youth capital is imperative in order to build the necessary capital for youth to become productive adults in society. Accordingly, the Government has designed policies and programmes which focus on youth empowerment and investment in young people.

Sixty-eight per cent of Zambia's population is below the age of 35. Like youth anywhere else, they continue to face a number of challenges, including inadequate employment opportunities; limited access to finance for investment; HIV/AIDS; and inadequate skills training opportunities.

In order to address existing challenges, the Government is implementing the following programmes: the promotion of youth entrepreneurship through a micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises development policy, which seeks to develop the micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises sector for wealth and employment creation; and the enactment of comprehensive legislation on gender-based violence and the development of protocols to facilitate the implementation of a national action plan on women, girls and HIV and AIDS.

The Zambian Government has recognized the important need to establish programmes for out-of-school youths. Accordingly, we have embarked on a vigorous programme of youth skills training and development in order to enable young people to acquire life and vocational skills, and thus improved

livelihoods, through the construction of trades training institutes and youth skills resource centres.

Young people in Zambia face many challenges in accessing financial support from lending institutions. Thus the Zambian Government is committed to promoting enterprise development for wealth and employment creation for young people, and to this effect it established a Youth Development Fund. The fund targets young men and women, disabled youth and those affected by HIV and AIDS, at concessionary rates.

No longer can Governments afford to devise a development agenda that addresses the concerns of young people without their participation. To this end, Zambia has introduced provincial youth indabas and appointed youths to various decision-making bodies. This has proved to be an effective way of engaging young people in national development.

It is clear that although there has been progress in addressing issues concerning youth, much remains to be done. It is important that the international community address key areas affecting youth, including the creation of a United Nations agency specializing in youth affairs so as to give more attention to youth issues; the prioritization of education, health, employment and resource allocation to youth programmes; and the strengthening of Government structures at all levels to enhance the implementation of youth programmes.

I wish to reiterate that our future depends on our finding appropriate interventions that tackle the challenges affecting our youth. It is our hope that this High-level Meeting will enhance our previous commitments to the youth development agenda and ensure that the necessary resources are allocated to this end. We hope that the outcome document (resolution 65/312) that we have adopted will further galvanize our efforts to achieve our common goals.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Iman Usman, youth representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Usman (Indonesia): Mr. President, on behalf of the people, in particular the young people, and the Government of my country, let me begin by saying that we share the grief and pain of the people and the Government of Norway over the heinous act of terror that took place last week, causing many bright young Norwegians to lose their lives. We would like to convey our deepest sympathy and condolences to the Government and the people of Norway and the bereaved families over their tragic loss.

At the outset, Indonesia would like to align itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Earlier this year, the United Nations Population Commission reported that the world population is now close to 7 billion. I should like to underline that nearly half of that population is under the age of 25. This reality holds both great potential and multiple challenges. The challenges are closely connected to the world's capacity to sustain human life, given the numbers involved. Can the Earth's available resources provide each of us with greater prosperity?

As we gather here today, we are reminded that young people today face the obstacles of famine, poverty, drug-related crimes, armed conflict and foreign occupation, among other things, in realizing their potential. Against that background, we cannot but enhance our cooperation in addressing these challenges, which young people throughout the world are facing.

This historic High-level Meeting is therefore timely and crucial, because youth are the stakeholders of the immediate future in all societies. They are the custodians of the world's cultures, traditions and norms, as well as the engine of global change. They represent boundless energy and potential as future leaders.

Young people constitute a quarter of the population of Indonesia. They have always played, and will continue to play, an important role in our history. It was the youth of Indonesia who shaped our national identity, and, in the late 1990s, initiated our journey towards democracy and political transformation.

We are of the view that youth employment and entrepreneurship will contribute to poverty eradication. We therefore need to collaborate in the process of finding ways to decrease unemployment among young people. We must invest in sectors that generate jobs for them. We must also work towards a global network for youth employment.

In this spirit, Indonesia will spare no effort in promoting the role and contributions of youth in the area of development. We believe that education is of

the utmost importance in equipping young people to shape and take control of the future. Indonesia will continue to pursue the goal of providing young people with a sound education.

As part of our regional and global commitments, we have been hosting regional and international conferences on youth to increase awareness and promote cultural diversity, dialogue and mutual understanding among youth. As Chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2011, Indonesia is determined to make ASEAN a more people-centred organization, with the full participation of our young people.

The primary responsibility for ensuring youth development lies with individual States. However, one of the key assets for successful national endeavours is international cooperation. Cooperation among international stakeholders is vital in contributing to youth programmes in all participating nations. Through cooperation, nations can exchange information about best practices and lessons learned, as well as intensify active support for youth programmes.

In this context, the outcome document that we adopted today (resolution 65/312) should encourage all of us to not only reaffirm our strong commitment to the shared objective of building a better world for all, but also to make tangible contributions to improving the prospects of young people.

Let me conclude by underlining the importance of synchronizing our policies and actions so that we can better translate our joint commitment into concrete actions in ways that benefit future generations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the European Union.

Mr. Serrano (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Iceland; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

In the interest of time, I am reading an abridged version of the text.

It is heartening to see so many young people and high-level representatives from around the world gathered here today, determined to improve the conditions of the world's youth and to open more avenues for them to shape their own and our common future. As many speakers have stated before me, too many young women and men live in poverty, suffer from poor health, lack basic education and employment and have no real opportunity to shape their own lives and their societies. In view of that, at this High-level Meeting on Youth, we need to reaffirm our commitment to investing in and empowering young women and men.

The European Union welcomes the fact that the outcome document of this High-level Meeting (resolution 65/312) solidly reaffirms the World Programme of Action for Youth and calls for its continued implementation at the local, national, regional and international levels. We also believe that the exchange of good practice best serves our common interest to advance the cause of young people, particularly the poor and marginalized.

Very much in parallel with international developments in this field, the European Union and its member States have incrementally developed specific policies addressed at young people and adopted a designated youth strategy in 2009. European Union youth policy is guided by key principles, notably that cooperation in this area should be firmly anchored in the international system of universal and indivisible human rights — a principle that is also valid in the United Nations context. The full enjoyment by young people of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is an integral part of the effective implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth. The EU and its member States are also committed to research-based policymaking and receive input from young people in a twice-yearly structured dialogue with youth and youth organizations.

In order to create more and equal opportunities for young people, we have developed a number of specific programmes and practical tools. For example, the Youth in Action programme aims to inspire a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans. It promotes mobility, non-formal learning, youth work, volunteering, intercultural dialogue and inclusion. The priority field of action "Youth in the World" is designed to support young people's participation in and contribution to global

initiatives, such as the fight against climate change and the Millennium Development Goals. It is an important agenda point for the presidency of Poland of the Council of the European Union.

Successful programmes for young people extend beyond the borders of the European Union. Erasmus Mundus, the global version of our Erasmus programme, aims at enhancing quality in higher education through scholarships and academic cooperation. In addition to those specific programmes, we also increasingly focus on youth issues in our general cooperation and dialogue. Many of the development activities of our partners, supported by the EU and its member States, benefit young people. We also promote the inclusion of young women and girls as equal partners in development, as this is essential in overcoming gender imbalances and promoting gender equality.

In closing, let me commend the focus on youth participation at this conference. We all need not only to give a voice to young people, but also to allow them and youth-led organizations to participate in the development, implementation and follow-up of policies relevant to youth. In light of this, we would like to encourage Member States to include youth representatives in their delegations to relevant United Nations meetings.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his initiative in convening this meeting.

At the outset, I would like to express Japan's deepest condolences and sympathy to the Government and people of Norway, as well as to the families of the victims of Friday's bombing and shooting, which deprived many young people of their precious lives.

The earthquake and tsunami that struck eastern Japan in March this year caused enormous human and material losses. Let me reiterate our gratitude for all the assistance and solidarity of the international community. I would like to take this opportunity to report the encouraging fact that a lot of young people have volunteered to help in the reconstruction of their devastated communities.

Today's young people are our future. They will be expected to solve the challenges we leave unmet. Therefore, we are responsible for addressing the challenges young people face today and for improving conditions for future generations. Allow me to speak about some of the challenges young people face today, as well as the issues to be addressed by the international community.

First, we reaffirm the World Programme of Action for Youth. We stress the necessity of implementing the Programme and of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Secondly, we believe that we must increase the participation of young people in society. At the international level, the Government of Japan has been implementing several exchange programmes, including multinational activities like study-abroad-at-sea programmes, and bilateral activities, such as home-stay and international discussion programmes, which allow young people from various countries and the youth of Japan to meet, live and work together, thereby enhancing mutual understanding between the youth of Japan and the global community. At the national level, Japan has created opportunities for our young people to participate in volunteer activities within their communities.

Thirdly, eradicating poverty is a priority issue of Japan's official development assistance (ODA). We especially recognize the vulnerability of girls and young women. In this context, I stress the importance of addressing the issue of youth unemployment, which is crucial not only to peacebuilding and development, but also to maintaining social stability in every country in the world. As we have observed in the recent developments in the so-called Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa, we should remind ourselves that employment provides a sense of security and pride, allowing a young person to begin his or her life as a full-fledged member of society.

Mindful of our responsibility to ensure employment for all youth around the world, we in Japan support human and social development, as well as increased employment and sustainable economic growth in developing countries. The basic policy of Japan's ODA emphasizes human security for every individual. Japan therefore contributes aid, both bilaterally and through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to thank the co-facilitators for their perseverance in coordinating the outcome document (resolution 65/312) for this meeting.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Let me first of all express my deep-felt condolences to the people and Government of Norway for the terrible calamity that they have suffered in recent days — a calamity that caused the deaths of so many young people striving for dialogue and mutual understanding.

I also thank you, Mr. President, for the confidence you have placed in me and my country by appointing me as co-facilitator to the negotiation process of the outcome document (resolution 65/312) of this important High-level Meeting on Youth. I would also like to thank my co-facilitator and friend, Ambassador Jean-Francis Régis Zinsou of Benin, for his outstanding cooperation throughout the process, and the Secretariat, for its great support. However, what has been achieved in this document, adopted today by consensus, is the work not of the co-facilitators but of the Member States, and it would not have been possible without the dedication and constructive attitude of so many delegations.

In the outcome document, the international community speaks with one voice on important issues affecting youth, such as gender equality; education, including human rights education; employment; health, including sexual and reproductive health; armed conflict; information and communication technology; migration; protection from all forms of violence; and the environment. The document builds on and consolidates existing achievements, in particular by reaffirming the World Programme of Action for Youth, and calls upon Member States to continue its implementation at the various levels. It also initiates further reflection on how to even more effectively address the challenges that hinder the development and participation of youth in a forward-looking way.

The theme of this High-level Meeting, "Youth: dialogue and mutual understanding", occupies a central role in Austria's domestic policy, in particular in the initiatives we undertake that are focused on the promotion of tolerance, integration, gender equality and human rights education. In our activities within the framework of the Alliance of Civilizations, we place particular emphasis on youth and women, and we have organized and will organize a number of important events in this context. We are currently preparing the second Arab-European Young Leaders Forum and we will continue this approach.

One message of this important Meeting should be very clear — there can be nothing about youth without youth. As reiterated in the outcome document, the full and effective participation of young people in decision-making processes at all levels is key to everything that we hope to achieve for them. Any meaningful dialogue or policy to improve the situation of youth also requires full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. For this, Governments bear the primary responsibility.

Youth movements around the world have clearly demonstrated that most obstacles that hinder youth development are rooted in disrespect for and the violation of the human rights of young people, in particular of girls and young women, as well as of young people belonging to marginalized or vulnerable groups. The opportunity presented by this High-level Meeting to understand and address these aspirations and demands of young people should not be missed.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to the co-Chairs of the round tables of the High-level Meeting to submit their summaries. I first give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ajay Maken, Minister for Youth Affairs of India, who co-chaired thematic panel 1.

Mr. Maken (India): I would like to make a brief presentation of the discussion that took place in panel 1, which we held yesterday under my co-chairmanship. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge and thank Mr. Miguel Ángel Carreón Sánchez, Director of the National Institute of Youth of Mexico, for co-facilitating the discussion with me.

The panel discussion focused on strengthening international cooperation regarding youth and enhancing dialogue, mutual understanding and active youth participation as indispensable elements of efforts towards achieving social integration, full employment and the eradication of poverty.

We had a very fruitful interaction that involved not only representatives of Member States but several young people from civil society organizations. We are very grateful for their lively participation and valuable

inputs. There was a general agreement that the issue of youth development needed more concerted international cooperation on the part of us all.

Let me highlight some of the salient observations made during the panel discussion that enjoyed the broad support of various speakers. There is a strong need for Governments to further integrate youth issues in their national development agendas, in close collaboration with other relevant stakeholders. The role of international cooperation in this regard is very important.

There was agreement that promoting dialogue is essential to mutual understanding among young people, their Governments and other stakeholders worldwide. The crucial task is to ensure the full inclusion of young people in social, economic and political life. The internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, cannot be achieved without the full participation of young people. Enhanced youth participation requires engaging with young people and youth-led organizations as full partners in decision-making processes.

There is also a need to develop genuine mechanisms for the active participation of youth in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes. That would also involve creating effective channels of cooperation, dialogue and information exchange among young people, their national Governments and other relevant decision makers.

The full participation of youth will not be possible if the development challenges that youth face — including social exclusion, unemployment, underemployment, lack of decent work opportunities, poverty, and the lack of skills — are not addressed. Efforts must be made to improve the quality of education and to promote access to education, including non-formal education and health services.

Acquiring capacities and skills is critical to young people if they are to better integrate into society. New technologies hold tremendous promise, and young people are adept at utilizing them. Access to these technologies is important. Information and communication technologies must be made more widely available to all young people to overcome the digital divide.

The positive effects of globalization must be reaped by the youth of today. The issue of international migration is a critical component in this regard. It deserves greater discussion in international forums in the context of the free movement of young people across borders.

While many issues are common to all young people, those most vulnerable, especially those with disabilities, indigenous youth, youth migrants and young women, face additional challenges and multiple forms of discrimination. Adolescents have distinct needs that should also be addressed. Targeted efforts are required to reach all vulnerable young people and ensure their full participation.

Laws and policies should create an enabling environment for youth participation. Programmatic efforts should focus on their empowerment and inclusion, not merely on consultation with them. These aspects should be developed at all levels, with focus on the engagement of young people at the community and local levels, where they have a lot of quality inputs to make and where they can develop the skills and experience that will enable them to participate more meaningfully in a more socially and economically productive manner.

We need to provide greater space in the media and other outreach mechanisms to display a more positive image of young people and their creative perspectives, intellectual contributions and ability to engage for positive social change. We should also emphasize the positive virtues of strong relationships of young people with their families, communities, educational institutions, youth organizations and work environments in order to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood.

Time constraints do not allow us to give a full and perfect summary of what transpired yesterday during the panel discussion. However, this summary attempts to capture of the salient features. I am certain that Member States and youth organizations will be able to consider this summary in the light of the outcome document of this High-level Meeting on Youth that was adopted earlier today (resolution 65/312).

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Clement Kofi Humado, Minister of Youth and Sports of Ghana, who co-chaired thematic panel 2.

Mr. Humado (Ghana): I thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to read the Co-Chair's summary of the discussion that occurred in thematic panel 2. My presentation is made on behalf of myself and my co-Chair, His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

At the outset, I would like to emphasize that this presentation is not a comprehensive summary of all issues raised by the speakers, but rather a short summary of the salient points made. In this regard, we would like to thank all of those who participated. We are very grateful for their lively participation and valuable inputs.

The discussion of thematic panel 2 sought to examine challenges to youth development and to identify opportunities for poverty eradication, employment and sustainable development. The key issues noted are the following. Many young people, particularly those living in developing countries, continue to face poverty; lack of access to education, health care and other basic services; unemployment and underemployment. Youth development is critical. It must be addressed through effective cross-sectoral policies and programmes involving strategic and coordinated partnerships among all relevant stakeholders.

Youth poverty is a serious global problem. Young people living in poverty are more likely to face barriers to schooling and skills development, with negative long-term effects on livelihoods and abilities to take advantage of opportunities. Quality education that addresses young people's needs, provides them with life skills and effectively prepares them for the labour market will create young people who are critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers. We must make further efforts to adapt our educational systems to the realities of the current labour market.

Greater national and international support must be provided for vocational training and skills development programmes that are aligned with labour-market realities. Education should also promote the value of social and political engagement. In this regard, many speakers noted that strengthening youth-led organizations to promote young people's engagement with others and their ability to learn ways to represent themselves and others is a crucial element in developing democracy.

An emphasis should be put on educating girls and young women, which is considered by many to be the single most important effort that Governments can make to promote development. Girls and young women must not only be enabled to start school, but must also be assured the chance to participate in school, to feel safe in school and to stay in school.

Far too many young people remain unemployed or under-employed, or are forced to engage in dangerous, ill-paid or unproductive work that does little to improve their skills and their prospects. Access to decent work is essential to youth development. Meaningful employment opportunities for young people must be created by helping them to develop new skills, knowledge and abilities.

Promoting the full and productive employment of youth promotes national development, and poverty eradication, social integration and sustainable development are components of the first step to access to such employment. In this regard, many speakers mentioned that special attention must be given to the specific needs of young migrants, as well as to young women.

The current high rates of youth unemployment must be tackled through targeted and integrated national youth employment policies that focus on inclusive job growth and improving employability. Employment must be targeted through cross-sectoral macroeconomic policies that generate employment-led economic growth. Such policies should be devised with simultaneous attention to issues of finance, social welfare and environmental protection and should be developed, implemented and evaluated through tripartite partnerships including Government, the private sector and representatives of civil society organizations, including youth-led organizations.

Access to basic services, such as education, health and information, must remain a priority during conflicts. Efforts must be made to ensure that structures and institutions continue to guarantee youth development at all times, including during conflicts. Macroeconomic policies must embrace sustainability and all stakeholders must work to support sustainable development. Investing in green jobs for youth is key and can contribute to poverty eradication and job creation. Young people must be at the centre of development, and involving youth organizations in the broader transition to a green economy is essential.

While many Member States and intergovernmental bodies make commendable efforts to integrate youth in decision-making processes, more can be done, in particular by ensuring that young people are seen as agents of development and not simply as beneficiaries of programmes.

In conclusion, I would note that we need to be optimistic about the future of our young people. Opportunities for their development exist everywhere if we can capture the initiative and take the necessary actions. Youth participation means challenging long-standing traditions. This may involve a degree of risk-taking, but recent events have demonstrated that change is necessary.

The President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker for this meeting.

Today and yesterday we have had intense debates. I thank all of those who took part in the debates and particularly the young people who participated in our work. I also call on all Member States to make every possible effort to promote the outcome document (resolution 65/312) as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.